

“BUT I’M NOT ALLOWED TO BE MAD”: HOW WRITING HELPS BLACK WOMEN
COPE WITH THE ANGRY BLACK WOMAN STEREOTYPE

AND MICROAGGRESSIVE EXPERIENCES

A THESIS

SUBMITTED TO THE GRADUATE SCHOOL

IN PARTIAL FULFILLMENT OF THE REQUIREMENT

FOR THE DEGREE

MASTER OF ARTS

BY

ALEXCIA M. KILGORE

DR. LINH LITTLEFORD – CO-ADVISOR

DR. RACHEL KRAUS – CO-ADVISOR

BALL STATE UNIVERSITY

MUNCIE, INDIANA

MAY 2018

Dedication

I would first like to dedicate this thesis to my family. My mother, Toya Kilgore, has been my number one supporter and has helped me to stay encouraged throughout my graduate school journey. If I had not been for my mother, my family, and my friends, I would not have been as motivated to complete this thesis. They all believed in my efforts to give Black women a voice in psychology and pursue research that makes me happy. I also would like to dedicate this thesis to Black women who feel silent, unheard, or who are gaining the courage to make themselves heard. I appreciate all of the women who courageously shared their powerful stories with me. Without them, this project would not have been possible.

Acknowledgements

I would like to take this opportunity to thank the people who were very helpful during this process. First, I would like to thank Dr. Linh Littleford of the Department of Psychological Science. Not only did she serve as my thesis co-chair, but she also served as my advisor and mentor during my time at Ball State University. Thank you for your encouragement, overall support, patience, and assisting in my growth as a student, a writer, and a researcher. I truly appreciate you going above and beyond to help me with this thesis project.

I would also like to thank my other co-chair, Dr. Rachel Kraus of the Department of Sociology. Thank you for your openness and willingness to assist me in developing as a qualitative researcher. Your encouragement and support is greatly appreciated. Your qualitative expertise was a vital part of making this project possible.

I would also like to thank my committee member, Dr. Paul Biner of the Department of Psychological Science. Thank you for your support and helpful advice throughout my time here at Ball State University. Your vibrant personality and constant recognition of my hard work made my time at Ball State pleasant.

I am grateful to have such great family members, friends, and committee members who all encouraged me to perform at my most optimal level during my graduate career. You are all greatly appreciated.

Table of contents

Abstract.....	ii
Dedication.....	iii
Acknowledgment.....	iv
Table of Contents.....	v
Introduction.....	1
Literature Review.....	2
Method.....	11
Results.....	14
Discussion and Conclusion.....	25
References.....	32
Appendix.....	36

Introduction

In July 2016, Erica Garner, a young, Black woman, began yelling during a town hall meeting. Erica's father, Eric Garner, was murdered by police in 2014 and Erica was granted the opportunity to address former President Obama on this particular day. However, she did not get to meet with the former president and she believed that she was only brought to the town hall meeting to bring attention to the event. Garner then asked the questions, "That's what I have to do? A Black person has to yell to be heard?" (Rankin, 2016). Although she later had the opportunity to meet with President Obama, she believed that in order to be heard, she had to be belligerent. Through social media she expressed that she was exhausted and tired. She did not intend to be loud and belligerent, but she would not be "used or silenced." Writer and social activist, Feminista Jones, responded to this incident by acknowledging how Black women have been silenced by use of violence or because Black women want to "avoid the angry Black woman stereotype." Jones then created the hashtag, #LoudBlackGirls. She wanted to create a platform for Black women to share when they have "raised their voices" and refused to let the angry Black woman stereotype to stop them from speaking.

Stereotypes that are experienced by Black women are different from those of other groups. According to Ghavami and Peplau (2012), stereotypes that Black women experience contain "unique elements" (p. 114) that are not a result of adding gender to ethnic stereotypes or and ethnicity to gender stereotypes, but the intersection of gender and ethnic stereotypes. Black women are a subgroup of Blacks and women. However, the stereotypes of Black Americans, which are commonly associated with Black men and the stereotypes of women, which are commonly associated with White women, are not the same for Black women. For example, stereotypes that are perceived as unique to Black women are being assertive, not feminine,

BLACK WOMEN COPING & MICROAGGRESSIONS

promiscuous, and aggressive. However, stereotypes unique to Black men are being rapper, hypersexual, and dark-skinned, and stereotypes unique to White women were ditsy and sexually liberal.

Black women experience a specific set of challenges that are based on both their gender and race (Lewis & Neville, 2015). In a recent study, 90 percent of Black women reported that they have experienced the angry Black woman stereotype at least once in their lives (Lewis & Neville, 2015). Research that focuses on Black women and these unique experiences is fairly recent and underdeveloped. This study examines how gendered racial microaggressions, like the “angry Black woman” stereotype, affect Black women and how writing could be used to cope with these experiences. To analyze how Black women cope with racial and gendered experiences, one must understand intersectionality. First, I will discuss theories of microaggressions and intersectionality. Then, I will provide background information of the “angry Black woman” stereotype. Finally, I will review the literature on writing as a coping strategy.

Literature Review

Microaggressions

The phrase “racial microaggression” was first introduced by psychiatrist, Chester M. Pierce, in 1970. Racial microaggressions are “subtle, stunning, often automatic, and non-verbal exchanges which are put downs” (Sue, Capodilupo, Torino, Bucceri, Holder, Nadal, & Esquilin, 2007, p. 272). Sue et al. (2007) expanded on the idea of microaggressions by labelling them as brief, yet frequent, exchanges that are insulting to people of color because they are members of a racial minority group. These microaggressions can be harmful to the person on the receiving end by affecting the individual’s mental health and perpetuating racial inequities in areas such as

BLACK WOMEN COPING & MICROAGGRESSIONS

education, employment, and healthcare (Sue, Nadal, Capodilupo, Lin, Torino, & Rivera, 2008).

Microaggressions is an umbrella term for subtle and offensive experiences that can come in one of three forms: microassaults, microinsults, and microinvalidations (Sue et. al. 2007).

Microassaults are intentional verbal or nonverbal attacks and can be thought of as “old fashioned racism.” An example of a microassault is someone using a racial epithet. Microinsults are subtle, but can convey a sense of rudeness or insensitivity. Context is important in these situations because depending on the context of the statement, the statement could or could not be offensive. An example of a microinsult could be when a member of the majority group tells a person of color, “You are so articulate.” Although it was intended to be a compliment, it could be seen as offensive because it assumed that the person who made the statement expected the person of color to talk differently. Lastly a microinvalidation is when the thoughts, feelings, or experiences of a person of color is negated or excluded. An example of a microinvalidation is when a person of the majority group tells a person of color, “I don’t see color. I just see you as a person.” When a person of the majority group says this to a person of color, it invalidates their experiences that they have encountered due to their race.

In 2010, Sue expanded microaggressions to areas such as gender and sexual orientation (Lewis, Mendenhall, Harwood, & Hunt, 2016). Microaggressions that extend beyond race still consist of subtle expressions that can be conscious or unconscious and offend people of marginalized groups. Gender microaggressions are “subtle expressions of sexism towards women that communicate conscious and unconscious messages to women” (Lewis et al., 2016, p. 760). Some of these microaggressions can include sexual objectification and assumptions of inferiority (Lewis et al., 2016). Although the idea of racial microaggressions can be expanded to other marginalized groups such as gender and sexual orientation, it does not address how people

BLACK WOMEN COPING & MICROAGGRESSIONS

of multiple marginalized groups experience microaggressions simultaneously. Lewis and Neville (2015) created a *Gendered Racial Microaggression Scale for Black Women* (GRMS) that captures the racial and gendered microaggressions, referred to as gendered racial microaggressions, that Black women experience specifically. This scale is important because it emphasizes the intersections of race and gender and how the interconnectedness of these two constructs affect an individual's experiences.

Intersectionality

The term intersectionality was first introduced by legal scholar and activist, Kimberlé Crenshaw in 1989. Intersectionality is the overlapping of marginal, social identities and how they relate to systems of oppression, domination, and discrimination (Crenshaw, 1989). Crenshaw centered Black women in her theory because of the multidimensionality of their identity that always seemed to be contrasted with White women and Black men. She analogized intersectionality to an accident in an intersection. "If an accident happens in an intersection, it can be caused by cars traveling from any number of directions and, sometimes, from all of them. Similarly, if a Black woman is harmed because she is in the intersection, her injury could result from sex discrimination or race discrimination" (Crenshaw, 1989, p. 149). Crenshaw argues that Black women, in particular, have been historically excluded from both antiracist policy and feminist theory. Thus, Black women's gender has been overlooked in race-related issues and their race has been overlooked in gender-related issues. Crenshaw (1989) also acknowledged that Black women were excluded because feminist theory and antiracist policy discourse are set around the respective experiences of White women and Black men. These experiences do not capture experiences of race and gender simultaneously for Black women.

BLACK WOMEN COPING & MICROAGGRESSIONS

There is evidence that people with multiple identities understand how their identities shape their experiences. When people are asked about a singular identity, they are able to identify microaggressions that are influenced by their other identities (Nadal, Davidoff, Davis, Wong, Marshall, & McKenzie, 2015). Identifying these microaggressions based on intersectional identities also makes discriminatory experiences more complex (Nadal et al., 2015). Every experience encountered by an individual is based on their intersectional identities, not solely based on one. Most women of color are usually aware of intersectional microaggressions and do not categorize their experiences as solely based on race or gender. Therefore, if a Black woman experiences a microaggression, she can say that the microaggression is based on her race and/or gender.

Like gendered racial microaggressions, gendered racism is another area of research that looks at the specific experiences of Black women. This term was coined by researcher Philomena Essed in 1991 as “the simultaneous experience of both racism and sexism” (Lewis et al., 2016, p. 761). Black women experience gendered and classed racism that is based on racist and sexist stereotypes that are used to control, marginalize, and objectify Black women (Collins, 1990; Lewis et al., 2016). Some of these racial and stereotypical images consist of the Mammy, who is a servant that is faithful, obedient, and hardworking; the welfare mother, whose impoverished and depends on the welfare system to sustain herself and her family; the Jezebel, who is an oversexualized woman; the matriarch, who is an aggressive and bad Black mother; and Sapphire, the angry Black woman (Collins, 1990; Pilgrim, 2012). For the current study, I examined how the stereotype of the angry Black woman, as a gendered racial microaggression, affected Black women and what coping strategies were used when they were labeled angry.

Sapphire, the Angry Black Woman

BLACK WOMEN COPING & MICROAGGRESSIONS

The Sapphire stereotype began as an “antithesis to the Mammy” (West, 1995, p. 461). Sapphire is usually portrayed as loud, rude, aggressive, and emasculating. She is seen as bitter and the target for her frustration is the Black man for either being unemployed or for dating White women. Sapphire Stevens was a character on the radio show Amos and Andy who constantly demeaned her husband, Kingfish Stevens. This stereotypical character could also be seen in other forms of media such as Aunt Esther in the television show, *Sanford and Son*, and as Coffy in the 1970’s Blaxploitation film like *Coffy*. This stereotype persists due to the media. According to Tyree (2011), “television audiences still tend to believe what they watch is a true representation of their culture and the people within it” (p. 399). Because some White Americans have limited interaction with Blacks, they base their judgments about minorities based on their stereotypical image in the media.

The GRMS (Lewis & Neville, 2015) included four recurring themes of the gendered racial microaggressions that Black women frequently experience: Assumptions of Beauty and Sexual Objectification, which 92% of the women reported experiencing, Silenced and Marginalized, which 91% of the women reported experiencing, the Strong Black Woman stereotype, which 87% of the women reported experiencing, and The Angry Black Woman Stereotype, which 90% of the women reported experiencing. The angry Black woman stereotype causes Black women to feel “pressure to sensor [sic] themselves to avoid perpetuating” this stereotype (Lewis et al., 2016, p. 768). However, the empirical data showed that Black women reported feeling less angry in situations where they are disrespected, negatively evaluated, or receive criticism than predicted by researchers (Walley-Jean, 2009). It may be that some Black women stay silent (Lewis & Neville, 2015) and act passive and nonthreatening (Pilgrim, 2012) because they wish to avoid being accused of fulfilling the angry stereotype. But these behaviors

BLACK WOMEN COPING & MICROAGGRESSIONS

are maladaptive. Research has linked racial microaggressions to depression, low self-esteem, stereotype threat (Nadal et al., 2015), anxiety symptoms, decreased psychological well-being, high blood pressure, and low self-regard (Wong, Derthick, David, Saw, & Okazaki, 2013). Specifically, Black women have reported feelings of psychological distress that stemmed from their microaggressive experiences (Lewis & Neville, 2015).

Coping in Silence

Researchers indicated that it is difficult for targets to cope with microaggressions because they have to acknowledge that (a) a microaggression has taken place, (b) if the microaggression happened because of the perpetrator's bias (racial bias or gender bias), and (c) the consequences that would take place if they addressed the perpetrator (Nadal et al., 2015). Coping strategies are "cognitions and behaviors that are directed at managing a problem and its attendant negative emotions" (Shorter-Gooden, 2004, p. 407). Common ways that Black women cope with racism are by being defensive, becoming overly successful, praying, positive thinking, laughing, seeking social support or by keeping quiet and accepting discrimination (Jones-Thomas, Witherspoon, & Speight, 2008, p. 309). Black women also try to decrease "the influence of racism and sexism by altering speech and conduct with others, avoiding negative situations, or being assertive" (Jones-Thomas et al., 2008, p. 309). In light of the angry Black woman stereotype, Black women may have limited options to respond or cope with gendered racial microaggressions. However, to decrease the detrimental effects of gendered racial microaggressions on Black women, it is important for researchers to explore how Black women cope. I plan to explore how Black women use writing as a coping strategy with gendered racial microaggressions.

Writing as a Way to Cope. Writing about upsetting experiences can have a beneficial effect on a person's emotional well-being and physical health (Langens & Schöler, 2007;

BLACK WOMEN COPING & MICROAGGRESSIONS

Macready, Cheung, Kelly, & Wang, 2011). For example, when people write about their most traumatic experience at least 15 minutes a day for approximately four days, they reduce their number of health care center visits (Langens & Schöler, 2007). Assuming that these writings are kept private, they can result in physical improvements (Macready et al., 2011). There are also benefits for disclosing writing about negative events. Macready et al. (2011) found that when people share their writing with others, there is a greater impact on self-evaluation and anxiety and negative affect decreases. Since the benefits of disclosing or keeping writing private differ, it would be important to distinguish between writers who intend to share their work and writers who intend to keep their work private.

Swim, Hyers, Cohen, Fitzgerald, and Bylsma (2003) explored writing and Black Americans' experiences with racism by having participants complete daily dairies about racist encounters on a college campus. Swim et al. (2003) believed that daily dairies was an effective method to learn about the experiences of Black individuals with everyday racism. An important finding in this study is that Black women were less likely to confront the perpetrator of the racial microaggression compared to Black men (Swim et al., 2003). However, for this study, researchers did not examine writing as a coping strategy.

Historically, we have seen Black women use writing as a method of resistance to address the encounters they have had with gendered racial microaggressions. Historical figures like Maya Angelou, Ida B. Wells, Audre Lorde, and Alice Walker are all women who have used writing as a way to convey issues Black women endure to a larger audience. "Literature by Black women writers provides the most comprehensive view of Black women's struggles." (Collins, 1990, p. 83). For this study, I defined writing as any form of written words used to address internal ideas, thoughts, and feelings. Writing is a broad term that includes many forms of

BLACK WOMEN COPING & MICROAGGRESSIONS

writing like journaling, blogging, freelance writing, fictional writing, autobiographical writing, poetry, songs, etc. These are all recognized as writing because Black women have found a voice in expressing their experiences using one form or another.

In the context of music, Collins (1990) talks about how the blues or jazz has been a way that Black women have found a voice. She stated that when Black women sing the blues, “we sing our own personalized, individualistic blues while simultaneously expressing the collective blues of African-American women” (Collins, 1990, p. 100). There is power in songwriting that is used to get a point across. A present-day example is Solange Knowles’ 2016 song, *Mad*. This song focuses on the angry Black woman stereotype. In the song, the woman is being told that she should not be upset and accept things as the way they are. Knowles, on the other hand, responds that she has the right to be upset and people should be more understanding and sympathetic to her instead of writing her emotions off as being an angry Black woman.

Freelance writing is another form of written expression. In 1944, activist and lawyer, Pauli Murray, found a racist note on her apartment door that said she needed to vacate the building within seven days because it was for Whites only. She said her response to this situation was to write. “I was learning that creative expression is an integral part of the equipment needed in the service of a compelling cause; it is another form of activism. Words poured from my typewriter” (Collins, 1990, p. 102).

In Alice Walker’s book, *The Color Purple*, the main character Celie wrote letters to God. Because no one else would listen to her, this was the only way that she believed she could be heard. Poet, writer, and activist, Maya Angelou mentions in her autobiography, *I Know Why the Caged Bird Sings*, that after she was raped, she did not speak for years because she felt guilty for the death of her rapist (Angelou, 1969). With the help of literature and poetry, she was able to

BLACK WOMEN COPING & MICROAGGRESSIONS

find her voice again and speak. According to Collins (1990), one can acquire a voice through writing. This allows the woman to break her silence with language and eventually she will begin to converse with others. Collins considers this as a method of women both writing and talking themselves free. Black women's writing has essentially been a tool of survival.

The Current Study

This study examined how Black women used writing to cope with gendered racial microaggressions. Research has shown that Black women commonly use defensiveness, success, prayer, optimism, laughter, and reliance on social support (Jones-Thomas et al., 2008) to deal with racism. This study aimed to expand our understanding of how Black women cope with gendered racial microaggressions since very little research exists on intersectionality in the microaggression literature. This study also aimed to examine writing as a coping strategy for Black women since it is not mentioned often as a coping strategy for those who experienced racism, sexism, or both. This study explored the reasons why Black women write in order to determine how writing is used as a coping strategy for gendered racial microaggressions. Researchers have suggested that Black women try to avoid perpetuating the angry Black woman stereotype (Lewis et al., 2016) and this stereotype serves as a way to silence them (Lewis & Neville, 2015). Therefore, I examined if writing about gendered racial microaggressions gave Black women a voice. I also examined if Black women would indicate that writing helped them express honest emotions without the fear of being labeled angry. Research has shown that writing can reduce emotional and physical impact if there are positive expectancies (i.e., "Writing about upsetting experiences will help me to see things in a positive light"; Langens & Schöler, 2007). If writing gives Black women a voice and helps them reduce emotional and physical impact of a negative experience, it should be a coping strategy for them when

BLACK WOMEN COPING & MICROAGGRESSIONS

experiencing gendered racial microaggressions. It was important to examine whether participants who intended to disclose their writing differed from those who kept their writing private.

When conducting interviews, I used a Black feminist and intersectional theoretical framework (Collins, 1990; Cole, 2009). According to Ritchie and Lewis (2003), feminist interviewing is more interactive and aims to eliminate hierarchical approach to research which tends to objectify the participants. Using both Black feminist and intersectional frameworks allowed me to more properly address these specific experiences of gendered racial microaggressions for Black women and to have the research completely grounded in Black women's experiences (Collins, 1990). Charmaz (2006) acknowledges that differences between the researcher and participants in race, gender, class, and age can affect the dynamics of the interview and what or how much information is provided from the participant. As a Black woman interviewer, I expected that my racial and gender group membership made Black women interviewees open up and feel comfortable sharing their experiences.

Method

Qualitative Approach & Procedure

I used a qualitative method to explore how Black women used writing to cope with gendered racial microaggressions. Qualitative research methodology allows researchers to study a phenomenon that is not easily interpreted by statistical analyses from quantitative research and allows for understudied social processes to be developed (Kraus, in press). Due to the lack of research on gendered racial microaggressions experienced by Black women (Lewis et al., 2016), I aimed to contribute to the development of research on gendered racial microaggressions by using grounded theory. Grounded Theory allows researchers to develop theories from data provided from the participants instead of relying on existing theories (Charmaz, 2006).

BLACK WOMEN COPING & MICROAGGRESSIONS

Qualitative research allows the participants to give detailed accounts (Kraus, in press) and answer the questions “why,” “how,” and “what” (Kraus, in press). With a qualitative approach, Black women can give more detailed responses about topics they write about, why they write, and how writing could be used as a coping strategy.

A semi-structured interview was best for this study because it is a loosely guided conversation that includes an interview guide that has a list of questions that I ask at some point during the interview (Kraus, in press). Semi-structured interviewing allows for participants to bring up topics during the interview that I would not ask. It is necessary for me to be open to new topics during the interview because participants may reveal topics or aspects of coping through writing that I may not be aware of, but I should be open to considering.

Each interview consisted of 18 questions about the participants’ microaggressive experiences and their writing. I interviewed each participant face-to-face or through video chat. Face-to-face interviews were conducted in libraries or coffee shops. For those who were unable to participate in face-to-face interview, their interviews were conducted in my home via video chat or telephone. The interviews lasted from 15 minutes to an hour. With the participants’ permission, all of the interviews were recorded using an audio recorder and I took notes on key points throughout the interview. The notes helped me refer to earlier points addressed by the participant and helped me frame follow up questions. The interviews were recorded using an audio recorder instead of a video recorder because it was a neutral and less intrusive way of recording an interview (Ritchie & Lewis, 2003).

Participants

A total of 24 participants were interviewed for this study. All participants identified as Black, women, and writers. Participants were older than 18 years and were from the Midwest

BLACK WOMEN COPING & MICROAGGRESSIONS

region of the United States. Some participants were students from a midsize university while others lived and worked in the Midwest. Participants were recruited by emails sent out through the campus communication center, via flyers posted on social media, and by word of mouth from other participants.

Data Analyses, Coding, and Emergent Themes

The 18 interview questions examined participants' style of writing, topics and themes they wrote about, experiences with gendered racial microaggressions, and how these experiences were incorporated into their writing. The questions were pilot tested with two Black women prior to being used for data collection. After all data were collected, I transcribed and coded all interviews by hand. Each participant was given a pseudonym instead of their actual names to ensure anonymity.

Participants were given one of two codes to distinguish their intent of their writing to be public or private. The public code identified participants who shared or intended to share their writing publicly. The private code identified participants who kept their writing private. It is important to distinguish public and private writers because the benefits of sharing or keeping work private differs. Research has found that public writing has emotional, physical, and psychological benefits while private writing only has physical benefits (Macready et al., 2011). Distinguishing between public and private writers allowed me to explore the reasons participants shared their work or kept their writing private and the associated benefits with each decision.

Since writing is a broad term, it was necessary to highlight the variation in writing amongst participants so that readers were aware of common and unique writing styles mentioned throughout the interviews. The types of writing used were not mutually exclusive because participants used more than one writing style to cope. Nine participants mentioned journaling, 15

BLACK WOMEN COPING & MICROAGGRESSIONS

participants mentioned creative writing, 13 mentioned poetry, three mentioned spoken word, two mentioned academic writing, three mentioned script writing, one mentioned comedic writing, one mentioned song writing, and one mentioned letter writing.

Results

Overall, Black women use writing to cope with gendered racial microaggressions. Along with experiences associated with the angry Black woman stereotype, participants mentioned other microaggressive experiences such as work and/or classroom microaggressions, colorism, comments about hair, and being negatively stereotyped. Participants expressed how writing was useful to cope with these microaggressive experiences.

Microaggressive Experiences

When asked about what gendered racial microaggressions they have experienced, six participants talked about colorism, six discussed issues concerning their hair, eight reported being negatively stereotyped, seven recounted facing overt racism, 13 disclosed being targets of workplace and/or classroom microaggressions, and 17 participants mentioned that they have been labeled an angry Black woman.

Colorism. Colorism is defined as an “intraracial system of inequality based on skin color, hair texture, and facial features that gives privilege to those whose attributes are close to those who are White” (Wilder & Cain, 2011, p. 578). Therefore, Black people have more favorable opinions and perceptions of light-skinned Black people compared to those who have more stereotypical, Black features or darker skin complexions. The interviewees mentioned that White people also treated Black people differently based on skin complexion. Destiny’s experience with colorism was negative and involved her own family member who was also

BLACK WOMEN COPING & MICROAGGRESSIONS

Black. Destiny's skin was darker than most of her family members'. She recalled her mother saying offensive things to her about her skin complexion.

"I remember my mother would say things like 'Girl, you so black you better stay out of the sun. You don't need to be out in the sun' and my cousins would never get those kinds of little messages. Or she'd slap a hat on my head, you know, 'make sure you keep a hat on this head. Don't get any blacker than you already are.'"

Destiny reported that as she got older, she became desensitized to colorist remarks and in her mind, she would try to not make it an issue or a topic of conversation.

Aniya also shared her experience with colorism. She talked about an incident where a friend told her that light-skinned Black people only could celebrate half of Black History Month because they are not "fully Black." Aniya identified as a Black woman and she has had many encounters where people made her feel as if she was not Black or that she was not Black enough, which resulted in erasure of her experiences as a Black woman. She believed that colorism invalidated her identity as a Black woman and led others to minimize her negative experiences with microaggressions. She did acknowledge that she had privilege as a light-skinned Black woman and she wanted to fight against racism and colorism. However, she believed that it was hard for her to do that as a Black woman when people invalidated her identity and feelings associated with race-related experiences.

Aniya mentioned another experience that could be perceived as a benefit of colorism. Aniya's skin is so light that she could pass as a White woman. As stated before, those who closely resemble Whiteness benefit more than those who are darker (Wilder & Cain, 2011). According to Wilder and Cain (2011), lighter skin can benefit Black people by giving them better access to resources, education, income, and spousal status than dark-skinned Black people. After having a physical altercation with her sister, Aniya was arrested. While she was in holding, she heard from other Black women that their encounters with the police were much more

BLACK WOMEN COPING & MICROAGGRESSIONS

aggressive than hers. After she was bailed out, she found out that she was treated differently because the police officers thought that she was White.

“I ended up getting arrested and not sure if you know this, but the police are brutal in New Orleans. Black people are poorly treated and that didn’t happen to me. They were very nice to me, they were very accommodating for me. And, I had talked to some of the other [Black] women that I was in holding with and their experiences were so much different, so much worse. And it made me feel bad. I was not sure if I could do anything about it, but I wondered why is this? My mom and one of my cousins came and picked me up the next day. And on my police report, under race, there was a big W. And I was like ‘oh, okay. I guess this makes sense.’”

Aniya felt sad after this because she regretted not saying anything to the police officers about them mistaking her for a White woman. She felt that the other Black women should not have been treated poorly for possessing darker skin complexions, something that was out of their control.

Hair. Several participants also reported microaggressions related to their hair. Sydney’s encounter was with a White woman who wanted to touch her hair. The White woman was a fellow member of a musical organization, and at one of their rehearsals, the woman continued to touch Sydney’s hair even after Sydney asked her not to.

“And she was just very fascinated, just never seen a Black person or what, but she would always touch my hair and I would say ‘Stop touching my hair!’ And she would say, ‘I can’t help it! I can’t help it!’ So, whenever she would reach out to touch my hair, I would just slap her hand away.”

Sydney did not like that this woman felt entitled to touch her without her consent. Sydney believed that slapping the woman’s hand reflected her being fed up and frustrated that White individuals think that they can touch Black women’s hair without their permission. Her words were not enough for the woman to stop so Sydney had to stop her physically.

Stereotypes. Some participants reported being stereotyped by others because they were Black. Imani mentioned being accused of stealing from a beauty supply store. When Imani was

BLACK WOMEN COPING & MICROAGGRESSIONS

exiting the store, the metal detector went off and the owner of the store, who was an Asian man, accused her of taking something and touched her without her consent. When she allowed him to go through her purse to see what she had taken, he did not find anything. This incident happened around the time that a video had gone viral online where a Black woman was physically attacked by an Asian-American man after being accused of stealing from his beauty supply store in North Carolina. Imani stated that,

“Of course, I didn’t take anything, I did not have anything to hide. I said, ‘you can go through it [her purse].’ So, he went through my purse and took everything out and saw that I didn’t take anything. So, by him not asking for permission to touch me or to be in my personal space, I felt really invaded. And also, because, he just kind of assumed that because I am a woman and I’m Black and I’m in here in your store that I’ve taken something.”

Imani felt that the store owner stereotyped her as a thief and that he felt entitled to invade her personal space and riffle through her purse. She preferred that he had asked permission prior to touching her and examining the contents of her purse. She did express how she felt to him before leaving the store. She has decided to never go back to that store and has discouraged others from shopping there as well.

Microassaults. Some participants reported being targets of blatant racism, or microassaults. As an undergraduate student, Pam attended a predominantly White institution whose student body population was only one percent Black. She mentioned that many of the White students often referred to Black/African-American students as “you guys.” She thought it was a euphemism for the pejorative term for Black people. She stated, “I’ve experienced being called a n*gger, but in college, I experienced ‘you guys.’ I’ve been called a n*gger, but ‘you guys,’ I was not able to know the difference between the two. Of course, you take offense to it when someone says ‘you guys’ and it’s not an African American person saying it.”

BLACK WOMEN COPING & MICROAGGRESSIONS

Although it bothered her that people referred to Black students as “you guys,” Pam began to understand that it was due to White students’ ignorance and lack of exposure to Black students. She began to take on the responsibility of educating White students and helping them understand that all the negative ideas that they held about Black Americans were not true and that they should not refer to a group of people as “you guys.” Pam believed that these encounters helped her grow and learn to interact with people whose views and experiences differed from her own.

Microinvalidations. One participant mentioned how she felt invalidated by her White peers when she expressed outrage toward the killings of Black citizens in the United States. Gabrielle talks about how she was told that she was being too sensitive when expressing anger related to issues that are seen as not affecting her directly.

“...this was back when the Trayvon Martin case was super, super big. And I still consider it [as big]...you know? And even my expressing that it was disgusting and how horrible the event was, people regarded me like—they put a distance between me and them. They were afraid I was going to start wailing on them and said “Don’t you think, like, it’s not that serious? Like, maybe you’re being too sensitive about it. It doesn’t affect you personally.”

This comment invalidated her experience in how she relates to the death of Black individuals being murdered in the United States by saying that it did not impact her directly. Being a Black woman she felt that this did directly impact her and her anger was justified because it could have easily been her or any of her family members being gunned down by another civilian or even a police officer.

Workplace Microaggressions. Other interviewees reported experiences with microaggressions while at work. Robin shared an experience where a White man had name called her and another Black woman at work.

BLACK WOMEN COPING & MICROAGGRESSIONS

“I just had an experience at work where a White man there, he addressed me and another Black woman as Velveeta and Pepper Jack. But at the time I did not know I was being referred to as Velveeta or Pepper Jack. I had no idea that that was his name for me... I heard him address her as Velveeta. But I never knew that he had talked about me as Pepper Jack.”

After she reported this incident to human resources, she stated that her White male coworker said, “I call her Pepper Jack all of the time. What’s the big deal?” After hearing his response, Robin avoided interacting with him altogether because she believed that he was racist for referring to two Black women in the workplace as cheeses and not seeing how that was inappropriate. Although she was shocked by what happened, she felt that workplace microaggressions were expected to happen in places that are predominantly White.

Angry Black Woman Stereotype

After asking the women to talk about their experiences with microaggressions, I asked them specifically whether they have had experiences related to the angry Black woman stereotype. Seventeen of the 24 participants had been labeled an angry Black woman at some point in their lives. Participants have been labeled angry because of the perceived tones in their voices during conversations, looks they had on their faces, disagreements they expressed, honest opinions they shared, and stereotypical ideas of Black women. Imani’s experience with the angry Black woman stereotype took place in a classroom. A White student stated that the reason for a protest that was taking place on campus was because “the Black students were mad again.” After Imani corrected the student and told her that students of all races and ethnicities were protesting, the White student responded, “Oh, Imani, are you mad? Are you angry?”

Others found themselves fulfilling the angry Black woman stereotype. Destiny spoke about being in an authoritative position and feeling that she could not avoid being angry.

“specifically working with White women, I’ve found there’s a lot of this passive-aggressive kind of striking back on their end of ‘Omg, you’re making me feel threatened

BLACK WOMEN COPING & MICROAGGRESSIONS

or you're making me feel attacked.' So, then, you begin to police your own tongue, like, I'll find myself in a meeting and I'm trying to modulate my voice. I'm trying to be very choosy about my words when I'm looking on the other end and realizing that that person is not doing that. They're saying whatever it is they want to say and however they say it, and with no concern of the thought that I'm receiving it, so, then you get more frustrated. And then you actually do become the angry Black woman, so, it becomes a self-fulfilling prophecy."

When Black women are in a position of power, they risk being labeled angry because they are assertive. Destiny stated that being labeled angry was a way for others to shut her down or to let her know that she was "out of control." She reported that during negative encounters with White employees, she often had to be aware of and control her anger while they were able to express themselves freely. She believed that when she became angry, she was fulfilling a stereotype, but White women could be angry and be seen as justified in doing so.

Aaliyah shared that some of her experiences being stereotyped as an angry Black woman occurred in dating situations. Aaliyah shared her belief that comments made by Black men about White and non-Black women of color were used to control her behavior.

"...I'm dealing with this guy, he said, 'just the way you talk and the way you answer me... just the way you spoke back to me, that is why Black men date other races because of this.' When they [Black men] talk about it, I say 'well what did I say?' And they say, 'Just the way you said it. You could have just not said anything. You had to say something back.'"

Reflecting on this encounter, Aaliyah stated that she felt that the angry Black woman stereotype had silenced her. Because she was accused of fulfilling the stereotype, she thought it was best to be silent than to be labeled as angry. Because Aaliyah did not want to fulfill this stereotype, she found herself self-silencing or controlling her tone when talking to others while they did not do the same.

Writing to Cope with Microaggressive Experiences

BLACK WOMEN COPING & MICROAGGRESSIONS

After talking about their microaggressive experiences, the participants and I discussed the extent to which they have written about these encounters. If they had written about the incidents, we discussed whether they wrote the events exactly how they occurred or how the participants wished they had handled the encounters. Twenty-one of the participants stated that they have written about their microaggressive experiences while three did not. Some of the women decided to not write about their experiences because they believed that race is a sensitive topic, microaggressions are a common occurrence, and that they have become desensitized to their experiences with microaggressions. Of the 21 respondents who did write about their experiences, 11 stated that they wrote about the situation the way it happened, seven stated that they wrote about it in a way they had wish it would have happened, and three stated that it depended on situation or gave an ambiguous response.

When asked why they wrote about the situation differently from how it happened, participants reported that it was because they were able to express different emotions in their writing than during the actual situation. Sydney mentioned, “You always think of something really good to say after it happens and you get the chance to kind of correct that when you’re writing about something. But at the same time, you’re like I’m happy I didn’t say this and this is what actually happened.” Kennedy stated that, “The poems I’ve written about my hair were much more angry [sic] [than when in person]. I don’t think I’m angry in my interactions, but in my poems, I would have more attitude than I would have had addressing the actual situation just because I think it’s the more productive way to handle it.”

Public or private intentions for writing. Participants were also asked if they have ever shared, performed, or discussed their writing in public. Sixteen participants stated that they have shared or plan to share their work publicly. Eight participants stated that they had not or did not

BLACK WOMEN COPING & MICROAGGRESSIONS

plan to share their work with anyone. Participants reported sharing their work publicly because they were able to free their minds, others could relate to their experiences, it was inspiring, or they could educate others. Makayla stated that, “I go to [predominantly Black] open mics and just tell it like it is...but I feel empowered. So, when I’m in my space, in my cultural community, I feel like “Yeah, I got this. I’m going to be all right.”

However, for those who did not share their writing in public, they expressed that they had not shared because they were fearful of being misunderstood, they were nervous, they disliked sharing their work, or they were worried about criticism. Imani stated that, “You know, sometimes you just think that, ‘I think this way. Maybe no one else would understand why I think this way or how I think this way.’ Even if you are expressing it verbally or expressing it through writing, through music, it’s just kind of that fear of they might not understand where I’m coming from.”

Two participants who did journaling stated that they intended to share their work. Although journaling is usually intended to be a private form of writing, journaling would be somewhat public for them. Both women were mothers and stated that they wanted to leave their journals behind for their children to read at a later date. They wanted to allow their children to read and understand the participants’ life experiences during different time periods in the participants’ life. However, the participants wanted to share the journals with their children only once their children were adults because the children would better understand them as adults.

While most participants stated that they intended to share their work publicly, many also felt that they were able to express themselves more freely through writing than face-to-face interactions. Some of the reasons that participants preferred to write were because they were able to express their true feelings, to gather their thoughts, and to avoid confrontation or interruptions

BLACK WOMEN COPING & MICROAGGRESSIONS

from others. Destiny, who was a playwright, expressed that she would rather write than speak directly to people because the people she was addressing could not interrupt her the way they could during a face-to-face conversation. She stated, “I think writing is easier, especially with plays, because the person is forced to sit there and watch the story that you’re telling from the beginning to end. Of course, if you hate it, you can get up and leave before the plays over, that’s one thing, but if you stay until the play ends, you don’t have the ability to speak back and to cut people off because that’s what often happens with us.” For Destiny, writing plays eliminated dialogue and forced people to listen. Because she had experienced being cut off during conversations, writing plays allowed her to not experience any interruption and to confidently express everything she wanted to say.

Participants were asked if they were worried about the perception of their tone through their writing. Fourteen participants expressed worrying about the perceived tone of their writing, primarily because they were concerned about criticism and feared offending others. Alexis said that she knew her poem talking about racism in America would receive negative responses. When asked if she was worried about the perceived tone of her writing, she stated, “Yeah, I think about it sometimes. Especially when I was writing [name of poem withheld], I felt that people definitely were going to be offended.” She had shared this poem with a class before and some her classmates misunderstood her poem and the point she was attempting to make. This caused her to not want to share her work with others again.

Emotional experiences during writing. Because coping strategies address problems and their negative emotions (Shorter-Gooden, 2004), I wanted to examine whether participants who used writing as a coping strategy would experience positive feelings. I also wanted to examine how participants emotionally processed their experiences with microaggressions. Participants

BLACK WOMEN COPING & MICROAGGRESSIONS

were asked to talk about some of the emotions they felt when writing about being targets of microaggressions. All of the words given were freely generated by the participants. When asked to give words that described their emotions when writing, 40 of the words mentioned were negative, such as anger, sadness, frustration, and confusion. Alexis, who experienced mostly negative emotions when writing stated that, “A lot of my poems are written out of anger and then some of them, where it’s dealing with my own personal problems, it creates a lot of emotions that really make me sad. And when I’m writing, like, tears are drawn because I’m letting it all out. But when I’m telling off somebody, it’s angry.”

Some participants also experienced a variety of positive emotions, such as relief, happiness, joy, and empowerment. Overall, there were 27 positive words used to describe the 24 participants’ emotions. Destiny’s response summarized well the impact of writing for Black women who faced gendered racial microaggressions. She stated that, “It’s a release to write. It’s a way to release some of the pressure I feel about certain issues. If you can write about it, oftentimes, it allows you to release some of the emotions. So, for me, it’s always been counseling minus the copayment.” Jasmine, who had a more positive experience with writing stated, “I feel more relieved that I can get stuff off of my chest, like, in my own comfort.” Writing had allowed participants to see that there were ways to overcome these stressful experiences and that the negative emotions did not last forever.

In summary, regardless of the type of writing used, Black women used writing to cope with gendered racial microaggressions. Some of the microaggressive experiences they wrote about included stereotypes such as the angry Black woman, stealing, colorism, comments about their hair, and workplace and/or classroom microaggressions. The women’s reports were consistent with Lewis and Neville’s (2015) finding that most Black women experience the angry

BLACK WOMEN COPING & MICROAGGRESSIONS

Black woman stereotype at least once in their lives. Writing about these microaggressive experiences allowed Black women to express their true emotions while at the same time not engage in any dialogue that would result in them feeling invalidated. Most participants also found sharing their work beneficial because they could relate to other Black women, inform others of Black women's experiences, and feel empowered. Others kept their work private because they did not want to be criticized or have their experiences be invalidated. While participants discussed how they experienced negative emotions (e.g., anger) when writing, they also talked about the positive emotions they experienced (e.g., joy). Writing appears to be a beneficial way for some Black women to cope with encounters of gendered racial microaggressions.

Discussion

Black women's life experiences are based, simultaneously, on their race and their gender. Although part of their identity is shared with Black men and White women, Black women's experiences are different because of the intersectionality of their racial and gender group memberships (Crenshaw, 1989; Ghavami & Peplau, 2012). Being angry is a common stereotype Black women face, which results in them having to behave or speak in ways to avoid being labeled angry (Lewis & Neville, 2015). The results from this study are consistent with prior research that found that Black women actively tried to avoid being labeled angry in microaggressive situations. The results are also consistent with prior research that Black women find themselves needing to pay close attention to their actions and words to avoid being labeled angry (Jones-Thomas et al., 2008). Even if they are not angry, it seems to be a stereotype that they cannot escape. They have to make sure they appear to be anything but angry.

BLACK WOMEN COPING & MICROAGGRESSIONS

The results indicate that some Black women chose to write about their gendered racial microaggressive encounters rather than address these experiences face-to-face because they could express their feelings more freely without the constraints of being labeled as an angry Black woman. Most of the participants wrote about the feelings they could not express during the interaction. Writing allowed the participants to relive and process the encounter without actually having to confront and address the person who made the microaggressive statement. These findings were consistent with previous research that found that Black women were less likely than Black men to confront the perpetrator of the racial microaggressions (Swim et al., 2003). In their writings, the participants were able to say what they wanted without worrying about how others might respond or react. Without a response, the participant did not have to worry about feeling invalidated. In addition, they were able to generate alternative responses pertaining to the microaggressive comment. Participants believed they could be more thoughtful and honest about the situation when writing than while in the situation. Writing about the situation, imagined differently than how the event actually occurred, allowed participants to express their true feelings without the risk of being labeled angry or experiencing other negative consequences.

Many participants stated that they enjoyed writing because they were able to create their own universe. It appears that the participants liked that they could control their environment and that they could respond more freely to these encounters in their writing. They did not have to worry about others' responses, confrontation, or dialogue that would leave them feeling uncomfortable or invalidated. These findings suggest that writing could be comforting because the women do not have to silence themselves and they can alleviate the stress and the negative emotions that comes along with not addressing the microaggression.

BLACK WOMEN COPING & MICROAGGRESSIONS

While participants could be honest through writing, some felt comfortable sharing their work with the public. Macready et al. (2011) stated that when writers share their work about traumatic experiences publicly, sharing the story allows the person to reduce negative emotions and negative psychological symptoms that are associated with the story. Scripts, spoken word, blogging, comedic writing, academic writing, and short stories were all forms of writing that participants have done with the intent to share their experiences with the public. Some participants wanted to share their experiences so that other Black women could relate to them and to inform people of the microaggressive experiences of Black women. Writing, in this context, is seen as a tool to share Black women's experiences with others and to express their feelings surrounding these experiences. Writing, also, tends to get rid of that fear of being labeled angry for some Black women.

On the other hand, some Black women were worried about the perception of their writing and were reluctant to share. Some Black women were reluctant to share their writing because they thought they would be misunderstood, feared that others might steal their work, and worried that others would criticize them or invalidate their feelings or experiences. Some worried that if they shared their gendered racial microaggressive experiences, others would perceive them negatively, inducing feelings similar to the ones they experienced in their original microaggressive encounter. It appears that some women wrote about their experiences, but they preferred that no one ever knew how they truly felt. Macready et al. (2011) stated that there were some physical health benefits that result from writing privately, but less benefits for psychological symptoms. Even though writing about negative experiences privately has some benefits, it may not be as beneficial as sharing it with others.

BLACK WOMEN COPING & MICROAGGRESSIONS

Langens and Schuler (2007) found that writing has a beneficial effect on a person's emotional well-being. Writing also produces negative and positive emotions for the participants. Despite there being more negative words than positive words mentioned to describe how the participants felt, the majority of the participants reported experiencing both positive and negative emotions when writing. It appears that when reflecting on their negative experiences, the participants experienced negative emotions. However, participants stated that they also felt empowered, happy, and relieved, suggesting that there were some beneficial effects from writing about their experiences.

Limitations and Implications

The first limitation of this study was that the age of the participants was not collected in demographic information. All participants were 18 years of age or older, but I did not ask each participant for their actual ages. For future research, a demographic survey should be included to capture important demographic information such as age, occupation, education level, etc. This demographic information would be useful because it might provide context to help understand the participants' experiences. Including age could help researchers determine if there are generational differences in how targets of microaggressive encounters interpret and cope with such experiences. Including occupation and education level would add to our understanding of the intersectionality of such factors with gender and race. Whether being professional, clerical, technical, or manual, the participants may experience and cope with microaggressions differently.

Second, I focused on how Black women coped with gendered racial microaggressions related to the angry Black woman stereotype. However, other stereotypes and gendered racial microaggressions emerged that I did not anticipate. Some of my participants mentioned other

BLACK WOMEN COPING & MICROAGGRESSIONS

categories that are part of the Lewis and Neville (2015) *Gendered Racial Microaggressions Scale for Black Women*, such as Assumptions of Beauty and Sexual Objectification, being Silenced and Marginalized, as well as the Strong Black Woman Stereotype. For future research, experiences and coping strategies should be examined for the other gendered racial microaggressions that Black women encounter.

Finally, future research should examine whether the frequency and severity of these events affect how participants cope. It may be that more frequent and/or more severe experiences will result in more writing. It might be interesting to also explore whether people who write about their experiences will become more likely to address microaggressions face-to-face after they have had opportunities to explore different options of expressing themselves in their writing. Another future research project could examine how Black men use writing to cope with racial microaggressions and whether writing is used to cope with stereotypes such as being violent and dangerous (Ghavami & Peplau, 2012).

The results from this study have some transferability, which is the fittingness or generalizability of the findings to other situations that are similar to some degree (Krefting, 1991). Writing as a way to cope with gendered racial microaggressions can be used to help with encouraging mental wellness in the Black community. Psychologists or psychotherapists can suggest writing as a way to cope with everyday microaggressive experiences for their Black clients to help improve their psychological well-being. Writing could be helpful for individuals to explore ways to deal with microaggressive encounters when they cannot address the person face-to-face. Writing could also be useful for psychologists and psychotherapists to understand their clients' emotions and experiences. There was a participant in this study who used writing to

BLACK WOMEN COPING & MICROAGGRESSIONS

convey her experiences and emotions to her therapist because she could not verbalize what she felt, but it was much easier to write about it.

This study also provided information on Black women's experiences when having to confront microaggressions. Confronting microaggressions are a catch-22 for Black women. If they speak up, they are labeled angry, but if they keep quiet, they can experience negative physical, emotional, and psychological symptoms due to stress (Wong et al., 2013; Nadal et al., 2015). Bringing awareness to microaggressive experiences can result in efforts to reduce these experiences for Black women and other marginalized groups. It is important that people understand that targets of microaggressions should not be responsible for informing majority group members when they are making microaggressive statements, but rather majority group members should be aware of the negative impact of their statements. One way to bring awareness to majority group members is to have them participate in diversity training in educational and work settings that focuses on majority and minorities' perceptions of microaggressions. Many of the participants discussed their experiences in the classroom and the workplace when it came to gendered racial microaggressions. These trainings can bring awareness of what microaggressions are and how they negatively impact employees, co-workers, or students.

Conclusion

This study examined how Black women used writing to cope with gendered racial microaggressions, with a specific interest on the angry Black woman stereotype. The findings from this study suggest that writing helps Black women cope with gendered racial microaggressions. This project examined Black women's intersectional experiences, which have only recently been addressed in the microaggression literature. The findings contribute to the

BLACK WOMEN COPING & MICROAGGRESSIONS

coping literature by examining writing as a potential coping strategy that Black women can use during experiences of racism and sexism. Writing has not been explored in the coping strategy literature for Black women. These results indicate that whether Black women decide to share their writing publicly or keep their writing private, they are able to express their true feelings about their microaggressive experiences when they write. Thus, writing can help Black women process their feelings and explore different reactions and outcomes associated with gendered racial microaggressions. Along with the beneficial coping strategies for Black women such as praying, laughing, positive thinking, and seeking support (Jones-Thomas et al., 2008), writing may be an effective strategy for women to process their experiences and emotions without having to worry about fulfilling the angry Black woman stereotype. As summarized by one of the interviewees (Alexis), “I feel like writing poetry has really helped me find my voice. It’s really encouraged me to really pay more attention out in the world and not be afraid to be who I am and embrace and love who I am.”

References

- Angelou, M. (1969). *I know why the caged bird sings*. New York, NY: Random House, Inc.
- Charmaz, K. (2006). Constructing grounded theory: A practical guide through qualitative analysis. London: Sage Publications Ltd.
- Collins, P. (1990). *Black feminist thought*. New York, NY: Unwin Hyman.
- Cole, E. (2009). Intersectionality and research in psychology. *American Psychologist*, 64, 170-180. doi: 10.1037/a0014564
- Crenshaw, K. (1989). Demarginalizing the intersection of race and sex: A Black feminist critique of antidiscrimination doctrine, feminist theory and antiracist politics. *University of Chicago Legal Forum*, 1989, 139-167.
- Ghavami, N. & Peplau, L. A. (2012). An intersectional analysis of gender and ethnic stereotypes: Testing three hypotheses. *Psychology of Women Quarterly*, 37, 113-127. doi: 10.1177/0361684312464203
- Jones-Thomas, A., Witherspoon, K.M., & Speight, S.L. (2008). Gendered racism, psychological distress, and coping styles of African American women. *Cultural Diversity and Ethnic Minority Psychology*, 14, 307-314. doi: 10.1037/1099-9809.14.4.307
- Kraus, R. M. (in press) Qualitative research. In M. E. Kite & B. E. Whitley, Jr., *Principles of Research in Behavioral Science* (4e). New York: Routledge.
- Krefting, L. (1991). Rigor in qualitative research: The assessment of trustworthiness. *The Journal of Occupational Therapy*, 45, 214-222.
- Langens, T. A. & Schöler, J. (2007). Effects of written emotional expression: The role of positive expectancies. *Health Psychology*, 16, 174-182. doi: 10.1037/02786133.26.2.174

BLACK WOMEN COPING & MICROAGGRESSIONS

- Lewis, J.A. & Neville, H.A. (2015). Construction and initial validation of the gendered racial microaggressions scale for Black women. *Journal of Counseling Psychology*, 62, 289-302. doi: <http://dx.doi.org/10.1037/cou0000062>
- Lewis, J.A., Mendenhall, R., Harwood, S.A., & Hunt M.B. (2016). “Ain’t I a woman?”: Perceived gendered racial microaggressions experienced by Black women. *The Counseling Psychologist*, 44, 758-780. doi: 10.1177/0011000016641193
- Macready, D. E., Cheung, R. Y. M., Kelly, A. E., & Wang, L. (2011). Can public versus private disclosure cause greater psychological symptom reduction? *Journal of Social and Clinical Psychology*, 30, 1015-1042.
- Nadal, K.L., Davidoff, K.C., Davis, L.S., Wong, Y., Marshall, D., & McKenzie, V. (2015). A qualitative approach to intersectional microaggressions: Understanding influences of race, ethnicity, gender, sexuality, and religion. *Qualitative Psychology*, 2, 147-163. doi: dx.doi.org/10.1037/qup0000026.
- Pilgrim, D. (2012). JCM: The Sapphire caricature. Retrieved from <http://www.ferris.edu/jimcrow/sapphire/>
- Rankin, K. (2016). How Erica Garner inspired the #LoudBlackGirl hashtag. Retrieved from <http://www.colorlines.com/articles/how-erica-garner-inspired-loudblackgirls-hashtag>
- Ritchie, J. & Lewis, J. (2003). Qualitative research practice: A guide for social science students and researchers. London: SAGE Publications Ltd.
- Shorter-Gooden, K. (2004). How African American women cope with racism and sexism. *Journal of Black Psychology*, 30, 406-425. doi: 10.1177/0095798404266050

BLACK WOMEN COPING & MICROAGGRESSIONS

- Sue, D.W., Capodilupo, C. M., Torino, G. C., Bucceri, J. M., Holder, A. M. B., Nadal, K. L., & Esquilin, M. (2007). Racial microaggressions in everyday life: Implications for clinical practice. *American Psychologist*, 62, 271-286. doi: 10.1037/0003-066X.62.4.271
- Sue, D.W., Nadal, K. L., Capodilupo, C. M., Lin, A. I., Torino, G. C., & Rivera, D. P. (2008). Racial microaggressions against Black Americans: Implications for Counseling. *Journal of Counseling & Development*, 86, 330-338. doi: 10.1037/0735-7028.39.3.329
- Swim, J. K., Hyers, L.L., Cohen, L. L., Fitzgerald, D.C., Bylsma, W. H. (2003). African American college students' experiences with everyday racism: Characteristics of and responses to these incidents. *Journal of Black Psychology*, 29, 38-67. doi: 10.1177/0095798402239228
- Tyree, T. (2011). African American stereotypes in reality television. *The Howard Journal of Communications*, 22, 394-413. doi: 10.1080/10646175.2011.617217
- Walley-Jean, J.C. (2009). Debunking the myth of the "angry Black woman": An exploration of anger in young African American women. *Black Women, Gender, & Families*, 3, 68-86. doi: 10.1353/bwg.0.0011
- West, C. M. (1995). Mammy, Sapphire, and Jezebel: Historical images of Black women and their implications for psychotherapy. *Psychotherapy Theory Research & Practice*, 32, 458-466. doi: 10.1037/0033-3204.32.3.458.
- Wilder, J. & Cain, C. (2011). Teaching and learning color consciousness in Black families: Exploring family and women's experiences with colorism. *Journal of Family Issues*, 32, 577-604. doi: 10.1177/0192513X10390858

BLACK WOMEN COPING & MICROAGGRESSIONS

Wong, G., Derthick, A. O., David, E. J. R., Saw, A., & Okazaki, S. (2013). The what, the why, and the how: A review of racial microaggressions research in psychology. *Race Social Problems*. doi: 10.1007/s12552-013-9107-9.

BLACK WOMEN COPING & MICROAGGRESSIONS

Appendix A: Interview Questions

1. What type of writing do you do?
2. What do you like so much about those forms of writing?
3. Are there any people you consider as your inspiration to write? What are some of the topics or themes that they write about?
4. What was going on in your life when you first started writing? How did you get involved in writing?
5. What are some of the topics or themes that you write about?
6. What is your favorite piece of writing that you have written? Why is this writing considered your favorite piece of writing?
7. We've spent some time talking about your writing. Now, I'd like to talk with you about some of your experiences as a Black woman. Gendered racial microaggressions are subtle slights that are offensive or insensitive towards Black women. Examples of this could include someone saying "hey g-i-r-l-f-r-i-e-n-d" as a greeting to mock Black women or making comments about your body such as how big your butt is.
8. Some Black women experience gendered racial microaggressions more than other Black women. How do you define gendered racism or microaggressions?
9. Tell me about a specific instance of when you have encountered gendered racial microaggressions or gendered racism.
10. How did you react to this instance? What do you think would happen if you confronted the person directly during the microaggression?
11. Have you ever written about these experiences? When you write about the situation, do you express something different than what you did during the interaction?
12. Sometimes, people stereotype Black women as being angry. Have you ever been labeled as an angry Black woman? If so, tell me more about your experience.
13. In response to the last question, do you feel you are able to express yourself more freely through your writing or when interacting with someone face-to-face?
14. When writing about your experiences, do you write as if you are talking to a person or a group of people?
15. What are some of the emotions you experience while writing about your experiences with gendered racial microaggressions? What about being angry?
16. Do you ever worry about the perceived tone of your writing? For example, someone may perceive you, a writer, as sounding sad, angry, frustrated, alone, etc.
17. Have you ever shared, performed, or discussed your writing in public?
18. Is there anything else related to how you use writing as a coping mechanism for gendered racism and microaggressions that we have not discussed?